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New York

President:	Mr. Holbrooke	(United States of America)
Members:	Argentina	Mr. Listre
	Bangladesh	Mr. Chowdhury
	Canada	Mr. Duval
	China	Mr. Shen Guofang
	France	Mr. Dejammet
	Jamaica	Miss Durrant
	Malaysia	Mr. Hasmy
	Mali	Mr. Keita
	Namibia	Mr. Andjaba
	Netherlands	Mr. van Walsum
	Russian Federation	Mr. Lavrov
	Tunisia	Mr. Ben Mustapha
	Ukraine	Mr. Yel'chenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Jeremy Greenstock

Agenda

Promoting peace and security: humanitarian assistance to refugees in Africa

00-23880 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Remarks by the President

The President: I want to welcome especially, and introduce to my colleagues in the Security Council, some high school and college students who have come from all over the United States today to observe the discussion on refugees. We have college students from Hamline University and the University of Saint Thomas in Saint Paul, Minnesota; Clarkstown High School in New City, New York; and the Adolfo Camarillo High School in Camarillo, California. I think they all took the "red eye", so if they fall asleep up there, they are excused. The Presbyterian Church has assisted, too. I am delighted they are here.

When I was a high school student, I, too, came to this body and watched it, as did so many other people who are now in public service. I am delighted they are here today to watch the Security Council in action, in this historic Chamber where so many important events have happened over the past 50 years.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Promoting peace and security: humanitarian assistance to refugees in Africa

The President: In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council decides to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mrs. Sadako Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

The President: We welcome you warmly to the Security Council, Mrs. Ogata, and invite you to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations. We will begin with a briefing by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mrs. Ogata. She is well known to the world, has one of the most difficult jobs in the world and has come here to join us today in the month which we are devoting to Africa in order to address us in the middle of a very busy schedule. After her briefing we will have an open discussion on these issues.

I thank Mrs. Ogata for coming and invite her to make her statement.

Mrs. Ogata: Let me start by wishing you, Mr. President, and all members of the Security Council a happy new year.

At this second meeting of the Security Council's "month of Africa" session, my thoughts go to the African people. A majority of them have spent Christmas, Ramadan and the turn of the millennium struggling to survive, in misery and fear. Let me, therefore, congratulate the Council on launching the "month of Africa". I hope it will also be the "Month of the Africans" because, while we celebrate this time of extraordinary hope, energy and opportunity, it is important that we also speak about the millions of dramatically deprived people living on the African continent. As the head of an organization which devotes a substantial portion of its resources to Africa, where the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) takes care of about 6 million people, I feel encouraged by this initiative and wish to thank the Council for inviting me.

Twice last year, discussing African problems with the Council, I shared my hopes and expressed my concerns, which, I should add, have further deepened. In July, at the Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit in Algiers, new and dynamic leadership in some key African States and the signing of the Lomé Peace Agreement and the Lusaka Ceasefire Agreement were the cause of some optimism. Six months later, however, the situation in many areas, especially in Central Africa, is becoming more critical.

In the last few years, the pattern of refugee crises, especially in Africa, has undergone significant changes. Refugees continue to flee violence and conflict — almost invariably compounded by poverty — and to seek asylum in safer countries. Others, and increasingly so, seek refuge as internally displaced people in safer parts of their own countries. In Angola, for example, almost 20 per cent of the population has fled, both outside and inside the borders of the country.

Dealing with the internally displaced is often more arduous than with refugees who cross borders. The

difficulty of having access to large numbers of people in insecure and isolated areas is compounded by the complexity of assisting civilians in their own country, where their own State authorities or rebel forces in control are frequently the very cause of their predicament. Hundreds of thousands of people at risk in war areas, such as the southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Angola and Sierra Leone — a majority of them internally displaced — are at present not accessible to humanitarian agencies. Where such access is possible, it is often very dangerous. The killing of two United Nations staff members in Burundi last November is only the latest of many such fatal incidents affecting humanitarian personnel.

Current refugee crises also have other complex aspects. The security, socio-economic and natural environment of countries of asylum are severely affected by large, forced population movements. It is the countries which have most generously hosted refugees that have paid the highest price, such as Tanzania and Guinea. Other countries, in spite of their own difficult situations, have nevertheless received large refugee groups — Liberia, for example, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. War-induced mass population movements have also contributed to the spreading of conflicts, as has been the case in Central and West Africa.

Throughout your recent African tour, Mr. President, you repeatedly declared that we need to bring quick — or should I say, quicker — solutions to refugee crises. Who would not agree, knowing of the desperate plight of refugee women and children in makeshift, inhospitable and dangerous camps? Seeking solutions to refugee problems has always been part of UNHCR's mandate, along with the need to ensure the protection of refugees.

The international context also demands faster solutions. Following the end of the cold war, the narrowing links between forced human displacement and conflicts have increased the concerns of Governments about human displacement problems. Pressure to resolve them rapidly is constantly mounting, and not only in Africa, as Kosovo and East Timor have demonstrated.

However, there can be no solution to refugee crises — and especially no voluntary repatriation — if wars that force people to flee are not stopped. Conflicts, in turn, will not be resolved unless some basic power-sharing problems are addressed. In some regions of Africa, controlling natural resources — oil, diamonds, wood — appears to be a more pressing concern, for Governments and rebel groups alike, than the welfare of people living in embattled areas. The relative ease with which arms are trafficked between countries all over the world means that conflicts are continuously supplied. The worst pages of colonial history seem to live again in situations in which people struggle to survive while small groups benefit from Africa's wealth and enormous resources are wasted in pursuing war.

There are no effective conflict resolution mechanisms in Africa; on the contrary, armed groups waging war against Governments are often openly supported by other Governments. And inputs to turn war into peace — and even to consolidate peace when it is attained, as in Rwanda and Liberia, for example — are very timid and piecemeal. Can we speak of any substantive reconstruction programme, like those generously funded by Governments in Kosovo or East Timor, in any African country today?

The effectiveness of humanitarian action can, thus, only be limited. This kind of war offers little opportunity for international humanitarian law to be promoted and respected. With human displacement having become a military objective, upholding the rights of refugees often has unwarranted consequences, because armed groups frequently infiltrate refugee populations. Clearly, refugee crises cannot be resolved in a vacuum. I wish to insist on this point. The "month of Africa" should be an opportunity for the Council to seek more decisive measures to address the problems that I have mentioned: the indiscriminate struggle for resources, the uncontrolled flow of arms, the lack of conflict resolution mechanisms and weak support to post-conflict situations.

From UNHCR's perspective, I would also like to insist once more on two security priorities: the need to build everywhere an effective law enforcement capacity and the need to provide systematic support to regional peacekeeping. I will not elaborate further on these themes, but would like to remind the Council of our proposal to develop middle-level security measures in the overall available ladder of options of which I have frequently spoken, and which some Governments have decided to examine. I hope that these initiatives, with the support of the Council, will yield some concrete results in the future.

I am not saying that my Office should abdicate its responsibility to promote the respect of refugees' rights, particularly the right to asylum, and to assist refugees in need. It is important that UNHCR make efforts at the

community level to assist affected populations, and ultimately to help refugees return home. Helping communities is an area in which humanitarian work, with its emphasis on vulnerable groups, can be a valuable complement to conflict resolution and peace-building efforts.

You have seen for yourself, Mr. President, that even in the absence of large developmental activities, UNHCR and humanitarian agencies have been able to carry out a substantive reintegration programme in Rwanda, a country where 25 per cent of the population are recent returnees, many of them women and girls heading large households. All these efforts, however, will be neither effective nor durable if they are not complemented at the political level by African States, supporting Governments and developmental institutions.

Therefore, I agree with anyone who argues that refugee crises should not be allowed to linger; that for humanitarian reasons, and in order to protect the security and prosperity of areas affected by human displacement, they should be resolved quickly. But without clearer, more decisive action by Governments, which the Security Council has a responsibility in inspiring, designing and leading, refugee crises cannot be resolved — unless we force people back from where they have fled, violating principles, threatening the security and stability of entire regions and, ultimately, failing to address the root causes of conflict and human displacement.

The situation is critical in many parts of Africa. Nowhere, however, do war and violence affect millions of exhausted civilians more than in Central Africa. There are unresolved and closely linked conflicts in or around at least seven countries — Angola, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), Rwanda, the Sudan and Uganda. This is an area in which refugee movements have continued to occur almost uninterruptedly since independence and have worsened in the last few years. Armed groups control vast areas in which security is very precarious and ethnic tensions are being exacerbated again — witness the attack in north-west Rwanda at the end of December, in which 30 people were killed and 40 were injured.

From the point of view of UNHCR, I would like to draw the attention of the Council to three Central African countries in particular.

First, Burundi. In the last quarter of 1999 alone, 30,000 new refugees fled to Tanzania. The total number of Burundian refugees in that country is now about 300,000. The number of internally displaced people has also increased. There are an estimated 300,000 people in regroupment sites, virtually internally displaced people created by a Government policy. This is an issue of great concern to humanitarian agencies. Although we understand the Government's security priorities, it is imperative that a number of conditions be fulfilled for assistance to be provided at the sites. People must be regrouped only on a voluntary basis; access by humanitarian agencies to regrouped people must be granted; and the internally displaced outside the sites must also be assisted. The Government must also give fuller and clearer guarantees for the security of humanitarian staff.

Most importantly, however, the Arusha peace process must be revitalized and strengthened. The appointment of Nelson Mandela as Facilitator is most welcome, and I hope that his statesmanship and charisma will allow negotiations to yield positive results soon. If Arusha fails, we can only expect more violence and, inevitably, more forced human displacement in Burundi, with unpredictable consequences for the stability of the entire region.

Secondly, the Democratic Republic of the Congo. There is a real risk that the Lusaka Agreement will not be implemented. This would have frightful repercussions, although, from the vantage point of the refugee agency, the consequences of protracted war are already a humanitarian tragedy. In my last visit, I was struck by the visibly deteriorating conditions of the people, in spite of the natural wealth of the country and the traditional Congolese resourcefulness. On the one hand, in spite of all difficulties, UNHCR continues to support the repatriation of Rwandans — 36,000 returned through Goma in 1999. On the other hand, however, over 130,000 Congolese have fled abroad — a large majority to Tanzania; and a very large number — millions, probably, although nobody can really estimate their total — are internally displaced. In spite of their urgent humanitarian needs, there can be little or no access to those internally displaced unless hostilities end and peacekeepers are deployed to protect humanitarian operations.

It is crucial that the Security Council provide more decisive support to conflict resolution in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The priorities are clear: stop conflict and deploy peacekeepers; obtain full access to all people with humanitarian needs, particularly the

internally displaced; and start reconstruction and development. The efforts of Ambassador Morjane, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to establish a United Nations presence throughout the country must be supported.

Third, Angola. The humanitarian crisis there is perhaps the worst in Africa. Once again, human displacement statistics are an indicator of the gravity of the situation. There are 370,000 Angolan refugees in neighbouring countries, and the outflow continues. Zambia has already 200,000, and since it also hosts other refugees, particularly Congolese, it is now one of the largest asylum countries in Africa. The number of internally displaced people in Angola is very large — one to two million — but it is impossible to estimate it precisely, since access by humanitarian agencies is limited. Security is the main obstacle. Fighting has resumed in many parts of the country. There are perhaps up to 10 million landmines. The peace process is all but stalled. Unless peace makes some progress, with concrete and positive consequences for security on the ground, it will be difficult to envisage the resumption of large assistance programmes in Angola, let alone a rapid solution to the problems of human displacement, including the return of refugees and internally displaced people.

In all three countries, renewed population movements are therefore a clear consequence of unresolved, and sometimes worsening, conflict. Everywhere there is a pattern of growing internal displacement, with decreasing possibilities of access by humanitarian agencies. This is of great concern.

UNHCR assists internally displaced people when there is a request by the Secretary-General or when the crisis is closely linked to a refugee or returnee situation. Other humanitarian agencies — particularly the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations — intervene in some situations. However, there is no established mechanism for the assistance, and particularly the protection, of the internally displaced. Donor Governments are very reluctant to allocate resources for programmes in fragile, insecure areas. UNHCR activities in Angola, for example, had to be drastically curtailed because of insecurity and lack of funds.

Yet the presence of internally displaced people throughout Central Africa is not only a humanitarian problem, but also one of security. Action needs to be taken urgently to compensate for the lack of protection mechanisms for internally displaced people. However, I would like to warn against isolating them as a separate category. Today the root causes of displacement, be it of refugees or of internally displaced people, do not fundamentally differ: look at Kosovo, for example, or at the situation in the North Caucasus. What is most important is to devise comprehensive mechanisms to protect people fleeing their homes because of persecution and violence, as well as comprehensive, regionally based solutions to their predicament.

In West Africa, there are more reasons for optimism, although some of the complex, conflict-related displacement problems persist.

For the 450,000 Sierra Leonean refugees, mostly in Guinea and Liberia, the objective is voluntary repatriation. This is clearly the solution of one of the largest refugee problems in Africa, and UNHCR is tentatively planning for the return of up to 170,000 refugees in the course of 2000, with organized repatriation — for those who need it — starting in April. However, conditions in Sierra Leone must improve. Action must be taken in three priority areas. First, adequate pressure must be put on the signatories of the Lomé Agreement to abide by its provisions. Recent episodes of renewed fighting inside the country are very worrying. Secondly, peacekeepers and military observers must be swiftly deployed to field locations. Thirdly, the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme must be given the necessary resources and implemented as swiftly as possible. In all these areas, the Security Council can play an important role. And from the humanitarian viewpoint,
the rehabilitation and reintegration of amputees — particularly children — is a very important priority that needs to be adequately supported for a considerable length of time.

Concerns about Sierra Leone should not make us forget the situation in Liberia. The country has received about 330,000 returnees from Guinea, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana in the last few years, and some 190,000 Liberians remain in exile. UNHCR would like to end the organized repatriation by mid-2000. The situation in the country, however, remains fragile. In some areas, like Lofa County, security is particularly precarious. Because this is a region of return and also of refuge for Sierra Leoneans, UNHCR is promoting capacity-building programmes for the local administration and police. Broader programmes, however, are needed

throughout the country to consolidate peace and prevent renewed human displacement. Resources for rehabilitation and development are woefully lacking.

I should also mention the Horn of Africa, where attempts to resolve refugee problems are conducted against a background of ongoing political tensions, with uneven results. There are many unresolved conflicts in the region — civil war in Sudan; internal unrest in northern Uganda; war between Ethiopia and Eritrea; and an unsettled situation throughout Somalia. In spite of this, UNHCR is working with Governments to try to bring solutions to the plight of hundreds of thousands of people who have lived — sometimes for decades — away from their homes.

The situation in Somalia is fragile, but repatriation from Ethiopia to more stable areas in the north-west continues and should be supported. Eritrea has recently agreed to resume the repatriation of the remaining Eritrean refugees still in Sudan. This is a very positive development. With respect to Ethiopian refugees, UNHCR is pursuing the implementation of the "clause of cessation" of their refugee status, since the conditions that prompted their flight from Ethiopia do not exist any longer; this is being discussed with host Governments. In northern Uganda, in spite of many security problems, we are proceeding with the local integration of refugees from south Sudan, and we hope to be able to promote the same solution for those in western Ethiopia.

Needless to say, these efforts to resolve refugee problems are greatly complicated by the tension prevailing in the area, within certain countries and between others. The Horn of Africa is another example of a situation in which UNHCR's humanitarian efforts on the ground would be much more effective if they were carried out in the context of broader political initiatives. I hope that the Security Council will take the opportunity of the "Month of Africa" to strengthen its support for the OAU initiative towards the resolution of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict. I also hope that regional efforts to bring Somalia back into the fold of nations will receive international encouragement and support.

In spite of some improvements, the situation in West Africa and the Horn is far from settled. The end of acute emergency situations, however, should allow the international community to adopt broader, regionally based peace-building approaches. In West Africa, UNHCR is planning to promote such an approach in order to address, for example, the negative consequences of refugee movements on the economy and the environment in some West African countries. There is a host of problems which should be tackled through a comprehensive, regional strategy in both areas, ranging from the need to strengthen administrative structures, to the collapse of civil society institutions, to abuses of human rights. The Security Council should promote regional initiatives — following, for example, the model of the Stability Pact on South-Eastern Europe — that could involve States in the respective regions, supporting Governments, regional and international organizations and civil society. Human displacement being, of course, a regional problem by definition, my Office would warmly welcome any such initiatives.

There are other refugee problems that I have not mentioned, of course, such as those concerning the Sahrawis, and the refugees from the Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in Gabon. The examples I have given, however, show that conflicts in Africa continue to have the most serious humanitarian impact on people's lives, especially when they compel people to flee their homes.

Let me say once more that humanitarian action alone will not be able to solve any of the problems leading to forced human displacement; it cannot substitute for Governments and the Security Council in areas for which they have a clear responsibility, such as peacekeeping and peace-building. The Council has an essential role to play in preventing, containing and resolving conflicts — and, hence, refugee problems — in Africa. This can be done by taking clear, strong and united positions; by supporting more decisively, rapidly and substantively the follow-up to peace agreements; by promoting the mobilization of resources for reconstruction and peace-building — in short, by moving from issuing statements to taking action.

The success of the "month of Africa", I am sure the Council will agree, will depend on how rapidly and effectively the Council's discussions here in New York are translated into concrete action in the field. We must strive to obtain what we have too often failed to achieve: that what is discussed and decided here in the Security Council actually helps the lives of women and men in African cities and in African villages become safer and better. We at UNHCR know very well that solutions are difficult and that to have a positive impact on situations that have deteriorated beyond description is a very, very tall order. But we must make the effort. In the Council's discussions, different approaches will certainly emerge,

and this is inevitable. The plight of Africans has become so critical that I hope the Council will be able to put aside differences and devise concrete measures to address it. This is now dramatically urgent.

Let me go back to where I started — to the African people. Africa, like the rest of the world, will not be secure unless its people feel secure. Those, in particular, who are of concern to my Office — refugees, internally displaced people and returnees — are first and foremost human beings in need of protection and care. I am thinking especially of the most vulnerable among them: refugee women and children exposed to even greater risks than their peers living at home, such as rape, AIDS and other epidemics, and forced recruitment; and the elderly, whom I so frequently meet in my field trips, and whose fear, despair and exhaustion, never fail to anguish me. They, above all, are the victims of the wars that we do not stop.

I agree with you, Mr. President, that their plight demands quick solutions. I have spoken of the support which my Office expects from the Security Council.

Let me conclude, on a humanitarian note, by saying that their plight also demands immediate attention. In spite of all the problems that I have mentioned, States must continue to uphold the rights of refugees and provide asylum when people flee war and persecution. Donor Governments must share the burden of asylum by ensuring an adequate level of basic assistance in camps and settlements, and for returnees going back home.

In both areas there has been little or no progress at all in the past few years. What is provided to refugees in Africa, including food and other basic survival items, is far less than in other parts of the world. This is unacceptable. I hope that the "month of Africa" in the Security Council will prompt the international community to address seriously this grave imbalance in material assistance.

On our side, at the end of the year 2000, we shall observe the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Among other initiatives, we are planning to launch a special refugee education trust, which would allow refugees, especially in Africa, to pursue post-primary education during their exile, an opportunity sadly lacking today. True, it will be impossible to meet the needs of all refugee students, but I hope that we shall be able to provide at least some support to the most deserving and needy.

Amid so much violence, terror and despair, this will be a powerful symbol of the willingness of the international community to support refugees, to help them make a contribution to their host communities and prepare themselves for a stable life after their plight is resolved.

We must give them hope for a better future.

The President: I wish to thank Mrs. Ogata for her participation in our discussion this morning and would like to acknowledge that Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked to be remembered to her in his absence from this room during her statement. He had to leave for an urgent meeting, but he wanted to express his full support for her statement and asked me to do so.

I also wanted to mention that in addition to the students I introduced earlier, we have many important representatives here today from refugee organizations from around the world. The Chairman and Director of the International Rescue Committee are here; Refugees International is represented; so is the Women's Commission for Refugees, as well as many other organizations. I thank all of them for being here today, and I hope they will keep their voices loud and firm, because the non-governmental organization community is so important.

I will now invite members of the Council to address specific questions to Mrs. Ogata. We want to have an informal discussion, at the end of which I will offer a presidential Statement.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): We wish to welcome Mrs. Ogata to the Council and thank her for the informative briefing. It is disheartening to know that hundreds of civilians in Africa are forced to flee their homes and become refugees or internally displaced persons, living under the most degrading and unbearable conditions.

Refugees and internally displaced persons, in particular women and girls, are subjected to sexual violence as they flee the safety of their homes for unknown destinations. It is even worse when they are now in danger of being infected with the most dangerous diseases, including HIV/AIDS.

Can we just express our concern and fold our hands? In our view, there are a number of concrete actions that the Council can take to minimize and bring an end to those situations which give rise to refugees and

internally displaced persons. There are also measures that the international community can undertake to relieve their suffering and agony.

There is an urgent need for the international community, and in particular the Security Council, to exercise the necessary political will to bring an end to the conflicts on the African continent. It is also imperative that, in those countries where the political climate is stable and refugees have returned, support be provided for development efforts to facilitate the reintegration of refugees and avoid the recurrence of conflict.

Time and again, the Council has expressed its concern over the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons on the continent. It is our view that the time has now come for words to be matched by concrete action. We cannot overemphasize the need for the provision of adequate resources to cater to the requirements of African refugees and internally displaced persons.

Over the past year, we have seen how differently the international community treats refugees from various parts of the world. We in Africa are not asking for special treatment. All we are asking for is that all refugees be treated in the same manner. Only in Africa do we see hungry refugees, refugees without medicine and refugees without clothing. Why is it that we do not see this in other parts of the world? We will therefore continue to refer to the discrepancies or imbalances that we perceive in the international community's dealings with refugees and internally displaced persons until such time that the situation is addressed.

Some have argued that African countries should cater to their own refugees. We have no quarrel with that. Africa has its own responsibilities to address the conflicts on the continent by inculcating a culture of peace and democracy. But African conflicts, which are producing millions of refugees, have an external dimension and these external forces should begin to help make peace in Africa, rather than make wars.

In fact, African countries are already paying a very high price. Most of the African countries hosting refugees are either least developed or, in the case of my own country, Namibia, have just emerged from conflict themselves. In accordance with international principles, they cannot turn those in need away. Thus, in both cases, their social and economic infrastructure cannot cater to these refugees. For example, in Tanzania, a least developed country, there are about 300,000 Burundian refugees, yet the assistance from the international community is minimal at best. There is an urgent need to assist African host countries. Failure to do so may impact on their political stability.

We cannot reiterate this point enough: It is important that arms producers halt the irresponsible flow of arms to disgruntled elements and rebel movements that are destabilizing and causing havoc in many African countries. Similarly, those countries and others that continue to sustain rebel movements by buying diamonds and other natural resources from rebels and their supporters are responsible for the soaring number of refugees and internally displaced persons and should cease forthwith. This is an area where the Security Council should do something.

I also wish to refer to the selectivity of the media in dealing with refugees and internally displaced persons. Some cases seem to be completely forgotten and non-existent, while others receive both media coverage and the necessary resources.

Despite the fact that there are legal instruments in place to protect refugees, combatants tend to ignore them completely. Internally displaced persons are in an even more precarious situation; there is no international legal framework guiding their protection. It is for this reason that Namibia takes account of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. We acknowledge that it is the responsibility of national Governments to look after their citizens, including internally displaced persons, but in situations of conflict, as we can all appreciate, the Governments' ability is eroded. These are abnormal circumstances and it is therefore important for the international community to assist them.

Every refugee or internally displaced person desires to return to his or her home and resume normal life. It is therefore important to create conditions that will allow them to return home in safety. This is where the entire United Nations system comes in.

I wish once again to thank you, Sir, for organizing this meeting and to express the hope that the international community will heed our call and provide the necessary resources to assist African refugees and internally displaced persons.

Finally, I wish once again to thank Mrs. Ogata for the briefing and her colleagues in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, as well

as in other humanitarian agencies, who are carrying out the enormous task of assisting thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons under difficult conditions.

Mr. Hasmy (Malaysia): My delegation is pleased to see Mrs. Ogata address the Council once again on this important issue. We benefited a great deal the last time she addressed this issue and are particularly grateful to have this latest update. Today's meeting of the Council on the refugee situation in Africa keeps the focus on the continent during this month-long consideration by the Council of issues relating to Africa during the presidency of the United States.

My delegation is grateful to Mrs. Ogata for her overview of the refugee situation in Africa. We entirely agree with her analysis of the problem and strongly support her suggestions and proposals, which we hope the Council will be able to act on.

No one can deny that the refugee problem affecting Africa is one of great magnitude. No one knows exactly how many people have been displaced, but we do know that the numbers escalate daily and that the problem of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa is not going to go away in the foreseeable future. Yet, it is not just Africa that is grappling with the refugee problem. Europe and Asia, too, have their share of the problem in the wake of the crises in Kosovo, Chechnya, East Timor and many other places. Undoubtedly, this has posed a tremendous challenge to the international community and, in particular, to international humanitarian agencies like the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other relief agencies in addressing the issue.

Various reasons have been given as the causes of refugee movements. However, in the case of Africa, the unresolved political crises on the continent are at the root of the problem, highlighted by Mrs. Ogata, which has led to the growing mass exodus of people from their homes. Indeed, the crises have become virtually intractable and are further compounded by other socio-economic crises faced by many African countries. Because of its cross-border character, the refugee issue has serious regional dimensions precipitating or complicating conflicts among regional States, as can be seen in a number of conflict situations in Africa, such as Angola, Sierra Leone, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. These conflicts have led to a massive exodus of people who find themselves in overcrowded refugee camps.

In spite of the commendable efforts of the international community, particularly the donor countries, to respond to these unending refugee crises, a permanent solution remains elusive. The numbers of new refugees swell even as efforts are being made, oftentimes unsuccessfully, to deal with the old cases. Clearly, because of the large numbers involved and other factors, resettlement in third countries has its limitations and therefore cannot be a viable option in resolving the problem. More and more, a permanent solution to the refugee problems in Africa must be found in Africa itself, with, of course, the necessary international assistance. Indeed, African Governments and societies have not been found wanting in rendering assistance to refugees arriving in their countries. Mrs. Ogata has many times commended Africans' traditional hospitality towards refugees. But this, too, has its limitations. Most host countries in Africa are confronted with numerous and unparalleled economic crises of their own and therefore can ill afford the luxury of hospitality, which can be politically sensitive.

Clearly, for the millions of uprooted Africans, the problem must ultimately be resolved in the context of much-needed new commitments and political will on the part of the African countries concerned to achieve peace and reconciliation. Clearly, too, a permanent solution must be predicated on adherence to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Refugee Convention, one of the cornerstones of the organization itself. In this regard, Malaysia hails the creation of the OAU award for service to refugees, awarded last year to Tanzania and Côte d'Ivoire.

But for Africa to resolve the refugee crisis, it will require sustained support and solidarity on the part of the international community, especially the donor countries, which, unfortunately, are perceived to have been somewhat lacking in recent times. This has been highlighted by UNHCR itself, as well as by the OAU, which has made an impassioned appeal to the international community not to forget the millions of refugees and displaced persons in Africa even as it rushes to the aid of other refugees in other parts of the world. We note with some concern the reduction in UNHCR's programmes for Africa due to the declining resources at its disposal, and hope that this will not affect its activities too adversely, particularly in the more critical areas of the continent. We hope that this is only a temporary setback, and that the situation will improve, with renewed generosity on the part of the donor countries, perhaps as a direct response to this meeting of the Council.

Malaysia considers the twin issues of the protection of, and access to, refugees to be matters of paramount importance. In many war-torn African countries, humanitarian access to the displaced is frequently obstructed or denied, with impunity. Humanitarian workers continue to find themselves under serious — oftentimes permanent — threats to their security. Such violations of human security are unacceptable and must be condemned and redressed by the international community, including the Governments and the peoples of Africa.

Malaysia also wishes to reiterate that humanitarian assistance must be apolitical in nature and predicated on the principles of strict neutrality and non-selectivity. Donors should resist the temptation to use humanitarian aid as a means of exerting political pressure on either party in a conflict.

The refugee problem is one of the many ills afflicting Africa, and no discussion of African issues will be complete without focusing on that problem. We hope that this meeting today, which is taking place so soon after the Council discussion on AIDS in the context of African security, will not be merely a briefing. We hope that it will serve as a second wake-up call for the international community regarding the need for concerted global action to address the plight of Africa. In the Council and other relevant organs of the United Nations, we should galvanize ourselves and our partners and respond promptly to the call for action just made to the Council by Mrs. Ogata.

In closing, let me reiterate my delegation's appreciation to Mrs. Ogata and her staff for their tireless efforts in alleviating the plight of refugees throughout the world, which deserve the continued strong support of the international community and this Council.

The President: I thank the representative of Malaysia for the kind words he addressed to my delegation and for his reference to a second wake-up call. For those present in the Chamber today who were not here on Monday during the meeting on AIDS, I should like to explain that the concept of the "month of Africa", is that this week we will talk about AIDS and refugees — the closely interrelated problems that touch so many different countries in so many different ways and cut across national boundaries — and that next week and the week after we will address the specific conflicts. Ambassador Hasmy is absolutely correct.

Mr. Dejammet (France) (*spoke in French*): We would like to thank you, Mr. President, for inviting Mrs. Ogata to speak to us. Her introductory comments were the best and clearest, although perhaps, also the most distressing, that we have heard at the opening of a debate. Perhaps I should say refer to this as a continuation of the debate that began on Monday on problems in Africa. Mrs. Ogata set out, as thoroughly as usual, the human aspect of the situation in Africa and, in the coming days, we should seek solutions in the light of her thoughts and comments.

I had thought of a number of questions to ask Mrs. Ogata, but when I heard her statement, I realized that she had, in fact, already anticipated the issues that would be of concern to us and answered all of the questions that I had in mind. I shall therefore content myself with asking her to elaborate a little further on the situation in West Africa, and to give us some idea as to the possible rate of return to Sierra Leone of people who had taken refuge in Guinea and Liberia. We know that the great number of people in Guinea — several hundred thousand — were a considerable economic, social and human burden on the resources of the State, which was courageously trying to handle the situation with support from certain other countries and from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). It would be useful if Mrs. Ogata could give us an idea of a possible time-frame for the return of the refugees, which might give some hope to the Guinean authorities, who, I should like to say once again, we must commend for having taken in the refugees from Sierra Leone in accordance with African tradition.

I should also like to know if we could obtain more detailed information about the humanitarian impact of the conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. We know that there has been some progress and that sustained efforts are being made under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity (OAU), and with our full support, to resolve the crisis. But from the outset we have been disturbed by descriptions of the humanitarian impact of the conflict. Since then, we have not really received any detailed information, so any information that Mrs. Ogata can give that might help strengthen the resolve of the United Nations and the OAU to end the crisis would be welcome.

I also think that further reflection on other subjects could be useful. Mrs. Ogata has mentioned the regroupment policy in Burundi. But we might ask, in view of the threats existing in the region, whether what is being done in Burundi could be assessed on the basis of the similar experience of regroupment in Rwanda. The

two countries have had to face obvious and extremely serious security problems, so any comparison between them could be helpful.

But what I would especially like to highlight from the High Commissioner's statement are the very strong and direct appeals addressed to us to respond in the exercise of our responsibilities. There is, of course, the ongoing appeal to donors to continue their efforts, in view of the gravity and scale of the crisis, which is unlike anything in other parts of the world. This was a quite legitimate appeal from the High Commissioner.

But above and beyond that appeal to donor countries, to those that can give something and continue their efforts — an appeal that we hope will be heard — Mrs. Ogata made certain operational points, notably the idea that humanitarian assistance in some crisis areas needs to be protected. I think that is a very useful point that we should bear in mind. The point was made by Mrs. Ogata in connection with the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Above and beyond the possible monitoring of the ceasefire, I think we have to remember that the delivery of humanitarian assistance must be protected. This means that people involved in peacekeeping operations must, under their mandate, be able to accept the need to accompany and protect the delivery of humanitarian assistance. This is not a new idea; it is something that we ourselves proposed in 1996. Our proposals were accepted and noted in two resolutions of the Security Council, though they never took shape. I think that the unfortunate consequences of that shortcoming have led all of us to reflect on the frightening numbers of dead, those who died because of lack of assistance in the Congo area.

So if we are thinking of deploying a peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we must very seriously bear in mind this observation made by Mrs. Ogata on the need to protect humanitarian assistance. This is one aspect of the mandate that we have to think about. This can also unquestionably, have a bearing on the size and scope of an operation.

The second substantive point made very forcefully by Mrs. Ogata related to Africa's establishment of the equivalent of a stability pact. Mrs. Ogata referred to what has been done in Europe, and its true that as of 1993, 1994, 1995, France had proposed the idea of a stability pact for European countries, affirming their independence so that relations could be established among all of them on a basis on mutual trust and with a view to avoiding crises and their humanitarian consequences. I think this same idea should be advocated for Africa. This would lead naturally to a set of commitments between neighbouring States, States of the region, to establish truly friendly relations and, within their borders, to deal with the fate of displaced persons and of minorities. It is obvious that where minority populations are threatened, they want to defend themselves by force of arms; at that point there can be displacements of people across borders, and then all regimes are threatened by the existence of armed groups beyond their borders that want to return to the country, but that also want to protect themselves, and that thus might use violence and threats. Therefore, the States of a region must meet around a table so that they can look courageously and clearly at the problem of minorities, the problem of how to strengthen democratic rule within States and the problem of how to protect within States people who have been displaced because they feared action by minorities from the exterior.

That is the basic objective of a stability pact, and it is something that African leaders should consider. I think it is one of the guiding ideas that will be discussed in the course of the meetings that you, Mr. President, have had the wisdom to schedule. I believe that we have to set an objective for the work that is soon to be undertaken under your presidency, Sir, here in New York. We must certainly strengthen the ceasefire and strengthen relations of dialogue and trust among the African leaders who will be coming here to New York. But above and beyond that, we must lay the foundations of a genuine conference on the Great Lakes region that, by dealing with the issues brought up by Mrs. Ogata, would establish real stability in that region of Africa and would allow the re-establishment of satisfactory humanitarian conditions.

This is the wish that I address to you, Mr. President: that the debates to be held soon here in New York, which began with the meeting this past Monday and now continue with Mrs. Ogata's statement, can really have — above and beyond the immediate consolidation of the ceasefire — a more general objective: a return to stability through an international conference on stability in the Great Lakes region.

The President: I thank the Ambassador of France for his kind words of support for the "month of Africa", and for his accurate appreciation of what will be attempted this month.

I would now invite Mrs. Ogata to respond to the four or five questions put directly to her at the beginning of Ambassador Dejammet's remarks, concerning West

Africa, Sierra Leone, Guinea and the humanitarian impact of the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Mrs. Ogata: Thank you very much for the questions, some of which are very concrete. I think the repatriation of Sierra Leone refugees from the neighbouring countries, particularly Guinea, will depend very much on the early deployment of peacekeepers and the peacekeepers being able to manage peace in Sierra Leone. I think the northern part is still very fragile. Our own plan for over 170,000 refugees is to start in April. This is being planned and it is foreseen, but it will depend a great deal on how, and whether, the refugees themselves perceive the prospect for security. So, I cannot promise; but this is what we are thinking.

As to the situation between Ethiopia and Eritrea, it is really a localized war, with very limited impact on the countries themselves. But at the same time, it does spread insecurity to other countries — for example, to Somalia — and in that sense we are very much worried about the possibility of spillover effects.

As far as Eritrea is concerned, we have completed a technical discussion with the Government. They seem to be willing to take back their refugees, which is a good sign. However, as to whether this war will be completed, it is a very disappointing kind of war that I think we have all deplored. I hope the efforts for peace will come very soon.

The issue of regroupment is a very touchy issue and one that we dealt with in 1997. I think that what the Government should be doing is providing security throughout the country, rather than regrouping some people in order to be able to take other actions in other parts of the country. We therefore have enormous reservations. Regrouping people and asking the international community to provide humanitarian assistance means having a kind of forced arrangement of internally displaced persons, and directing assistance from the international community will not solve the problem at all. So we do have enormous reservations. However, if the people are in dire need, then we have a dilemma. We do have to provide some minimal assistance.

I am very pleased to note that Ambassador Dejammet has considered the idea of stability. All the refugee problems have to be solved regionally. Refugees cross borders and place enormous burdens on neighbouring countries. So neighbouring countries, together with the countries of origin, can only sit down together to solve the problem. I hope you will be able to examine these prospects further.

Miss Durrant (Jamaica): I would like to express my delegation's appreciation to you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting to address the critical situation of refugees in Africa.

I also wish to thank Mrs. Ogata for her comprehensive briefing, in which she addressed the plight of refugees and internally displaced persons and the problems faced by host Governments, as well as how the international community needs to respond to the challenges posed by humanitarian crises in countries involved in, or emerging from, conflicts in Africa.

As the President of the General Assembly, Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, reminded us last September,

> "These neglected masses of fellow human beings have been displaced largely by devastating wars, some resulting from ethnic hatred and others from contested borders as well as natural disasters. These are women, children and men who are deprived of the basic human necessities and who end up being no one's responsibility. Their fate should be of common concern." *[A/54/PV.1, p. 5]*

The most recent figures indicate that there are over 6 million people of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Africa. This includes over 3 million refugees, over 1.5 million internally displaced persons and 1.3 million former refugees who have recently returned home.

During a similar briefing to the Council in July 1999, Mrs. Ogata underscored that the implementation of political agreements between warring factions was critical to the resolution of some of the worst refugee problems in Africa. While we are heartened by the signing of the two peace agreements, in Lomé and Lusaka, dealing with the conflicts in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, respectively, it is evident that this is only a first step in solving the refugee crisis. We agree with Mrs. Ogata that the Council has a vital role to play in preventing and containing conflicts and supporting follow-up to peace agreements. Only by addressing the root causes of conflicts will the international community be able to provide lasting answers to the refugee problems facing Africa.

We all agree that several challenges lie ahead, the most compelling being the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons back into their societies. Equal attention needs to be given to the security of refugees and the need to allocate resources to assist host Governments cushion the impact of refugees on their economies and societies. It is in this context that my delegation welcomes the proposals made this morning my Mrs. Ogata.

We wish to recognize the progress UNHCR has made in recent years in addressing the crisis. Some of the steps taken by UNHCR have included, in some instances, the settling of refugees at a reasonable distance from the areas of conflict and borders and assisting host Governments in maintaining the security and neutrality of refugee camps and settlements. We hope that Mrs. Ogata will tell us more about the progress of the UNHCR initiative to maintain the security and neutrality of refugee camps, especially in the Great Lakes region.

We were also heartened to take note from Mrs. Ogata's statement of the initiative taken by UNHCR and humanitarian agencies in carrying out a substantial re-integration programme in Rwanda.

UNHCR has also provided draft model legislation, assisted Governments in providing structures to deal with refugee issues, and provided training for Government officials. Nevertheless, we recognize that further steps need to be taken to ensure that all refugees and internally displaced persons, notably women and children, are adequately protected.

Another challenge faced by the international community is the need to strengthen compliance with international legal instruments, including the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol and, in the case of Africa, the 1969 Organization of African Unity (OAU) Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. It is regrettable that these international instruments are often not adhered to by the parties in conflict, much to the detriment of innocent populations. Refugees and internally displaced persons should be protected by humanitarian laws as members of the civilian population. As such, they must always be treated with humanity and protected from acts of violence.

The role of African regional and subregional organizations in seeking to address the problem of refugees and displaced persons must not be underestimated. We commend the OAU for its initiative in 1998 to convene a ministerial meeting on refugees and internally displaced persons, and in making key recommendations for action by the international community. In this regard, my delegation believes that the Council must continue to urge Member States to take measures to address the root causes of conflicts and to recommit themselves to the relevant refugee instruments.

Refugee protection, through asylum, protection and security in Africa, must be strengthened, and durable solutions, including voluntary repatriation and reintegration of refugees, provided.

We also need to support the consolidation of the reintegration process through various means, including community-based and participatory programmes, reintegration and rehabilitation programmes, and international support and commitment. We must also assist in building Africa's capacity to respond to refugee and internal displacement. The Security Council must also work with the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to fashion a lasting response from the United Nations.

While considerable attention is given to the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis in Africa, we cannot ignore the fact that for host Governments, the flow of refugees constitutes a security problem. We regret the fact that in several instances, refugee camps are potential pools for rebel recruitment and pose a threat to the peace and security of the communities. The health status of refugees is also a cause for great concern, as noted during the debate earlier this week on the impact of AIDS.

We also deplore the fact that increasingly, refugees and displaced persons are deprived of necessary amenities such as food, water and shelter, owing to obstacles which are encountered in the delivery of humanitarian assistance. We must applaud the untiring efforts of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross, the non-governmental organizations, the donor communities and the United Nations funds and programmes in seeking to meet the humanitarian needs of refugees and displaced persons, often at great risk to the lives of the staff concerned, and Mrs. Ogata referred to that this morning.

The international community has a responsibility to assist in ameliorating the economic, social and environmental effects of massive flows of refugees. We cannot turn our backs on Africa. We need to ensure that

Africa receives equal treatment in the allocation of resources.

Mrs. Ogata has today given us food for thought. The Council must heed her advice and take action now.

The President: Mrs. Ogata, would you like to respond at least to the first question on maintaining the security and neutrality of the camps in the Great Lakes region, and to make any other comments you would like to make?

Mrs. Ogata: This is one of the greatest difficulties we faced in the Zairian camps in 1996, and although through the Secretary-General we appealed for peacekeeping or policing arrangements, this was not successful. At the end, our own colleagues had to devise approaches, which worked somewhat in the beginning but was not adequate.

In other places, however, we assist the host Governments with some policing and provide funds, training and the necessary technical equipment. I think it is better that we do that than otherwise, but it is far from adequate in really ensuring neutrality and the civilian character of refugee camps. Since most of the refugees today are victims of internal conflict and flee their countries either temporarily or in an effort to fight back, it is very difficult to really maintain the camps' civilian character. We do our very best, but our determined efforts cannot suffice. I would very much like to receive some ideas on how to do this.

Internationally, I am told that it is more difficult to get international police than international peacekeepers, and what we greatly need in these areas is the presence of international police, or the strengthening of national police capacity.

The President: In light of the time, I would remind members again that we are trying to operate under what I would call the Greenstock rules of short, non-repetitive speeches. A lot of issues have already been raised, and I hope for a maximum exchange of views with Mrs. Ogata, because our purpose here is to give her our points of view and learn from her so we can factor it into the remainder of the month and beyond.

Mr. Duval (Canada) (*spoke in French*): Canada welcomes this open meeting of the Security Council on the very important question of the situation of refugees in Africa. We believe that this debate will be very useful to the Council's work in the coming weeks.

First of all, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to the High Commissioner, Mrs. Ogata, for the very comprehensive statement she has made today on the situation of refugees and other displaced persons in Africa. We would also thank her for the excellent advice she has offered the Security Council in its further work.

We also commend her and her team for the protection and invaluable assistance they provide refugees, often at the risk of their lives. Indeed, 36 personnel died in the Great Lakes region in the 1994-1996 period. We also congratulate her on the cooperation she and her team offer Governments, thus enabling them to discharge their responsibilities to the refugees that they so generously take in. I assure her of Canada's continuing support.

Emphasis has been placed on the fact that despite the efforts made, in several countries the number of refugees has not decreased. Reference was made to Guinea, Tanzania, the Sudan and Kenya, and further flows have occurred in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Angola, Ethiopia and Eritrea. To these we must add, as was stressed by the High Commissioner, the many Africans displaced within their own countries. Their number has also increased, with particularly devastating consequences for their countries, for, unlike most refugees, these displaced persons do not usually benefit from protection and assistance comparable to that given refugees.

Under the best possible conditions, flows of desperate peoples crossing borders in a very short period of time have a significant impact on the humanitarian and security situation at the regional and national levels. Nevertheless, as we are seeing in Africa, the host countries — whose infrastructures often have already been weakened — can become overwhelmed and experience an increase in social tension. The situation can deteriorate even further when these flows are the result of a deliberate tactic of war and when conflicts threaten to spill over national borders and involve other countries. This phenomenon is not confined to Africa alone. We have seen it in Europe and neighbouring areas, in the Balkans and the Northern Caucasus.

I would like to express my Government's gratitude for the generosity and spirit of solidarity shown by many African host countries, including Tanzania and Guinea, which have without fail taken in peoples from neighbouring countries affected by war and for their

commitment to fulfilling their obligations under international law on refugees.

Canada wishes to underline the importance of countries' continuing to provide a safe haven to all those who manage to cross a border so as to save their lives. We should demonstrate more solidarity with them in their efforts. We must also stress the responsibilities of African countries, and indeed of countries in all parts of the world whose people are internally displaced, to ensure that those peoples' rights are protected under international humanitarian law, human rights law and the laws of their countries of origin, as in the case of the conflict between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

In those cases where countries cannot or will not provide the necessary protection and assistance to their peoples, they nevertheless have the responsibility to provide full access, in conditions of complete security and without restrictions, to others in order that those peoples' basic needs can be met.

Angola and the Sudan are examples of situations where this kind of problem exists. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons, Mr. Francis Deng, has rightly said that sovereignty does not exempt countries of responsibility. This is a point we have often made.

Thus, we have to continue demanding stronger efforts to protect and help refugees and internally displaced persons and other populations affected by war. However, along with Mrs. Ogata, we must recognize that population movements are only a symptom of political crises.

The Security Council and the whole of the international community must show more imagination and look more resolutely at the political causes of the humanitarian crises in Africa and elsewhere. We can do this through mandates taking the human security requirement into account, as well as through a decompartmentalization of efforts so as to provide greater effectiveness for United Nations missions. The Security Council has an important role to play in this task. Besides, as the High Commissioner has stressed, when a matter has been resolved politically, the task does not step there. The international community must continue to encourage reconstruction and reconciliation in order to ensure lasting peace and ensure that the displaced populations can return to their countries and be reintegrated with dignity and in a climate of security.

The countries of origin have a central role to play in eliminating the underlying causes of population displacement and in doing their utmost to ensure that their nationals have good reason to return home with a sense of confidence. This point applies particularly to the countries of the Great Lakes region, where there have been cyclical population movements because of continuing conflict. We can see that these populations are very reluctant to return home.

In conclusion, I would like to come back to one particular point made by the High Commissioner. A large proportion of refugees and displaced persons are children and adolescents. We have many with us today. I wonder if the High Commissioner could tell us what her Office is doing to ensure that the specific needs of these children and adolescents are met, and if she could speak on specific measures to help girls, particularly with regard to protection, education and vocational training.

Mrs. Ogata: As I said in my statement, we would like to augment the possibility for refugee children, and girls in particular because they are usually more deprived of educational opportunities at the secondary school level. I say this because somehow in most refugee camps we manage to provide some primary school education, but when it gets to the secondary level, it hardly exists. We feel that for the refugees who are temporarily outside of education possibilities, or their own home environments, it would be very important that they be given educational opportunities so that once they go back home, or when they become part of the countries of asylum — integration — they will turn into useful citizens.

This is why it is a bit of a longer term view, but I think we should not deprive children from being properly educated. This is particularly special in Africa. I noted this experience by receiving some letters from 12- and 14-year old refugee children, who really appealed for education opportunities. And I was very touched.

Mr. Ben Mustapha (Tunisia) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to say how much we appreciate the fact that you have chosen Africa as the subject to be discussed in the Security Council. This reflects the importance that the international community attaches to the refugee problem in Africa, and it should encourage the international community's interest in giving more serious attention to this problem that can threaten stability of States, thereby threatening peace and security throughout the world, especially in Africa.

I would particularly like to express my thanks and high esteem to Mrs. Sadako Ogata for her important address, in which she talked about the magnitude and importance of this problem and how to deal with it. We would like to commend the tremendous efforts that she and her co-workers have made to deal with this problem.

Mrs. Ogata and previous speakers have approached this topic from many different angles. They have touched upon the dramatic situation caused by the existence of millions of refugees and displaced persons in African countries, which entails human suffering, particularly for women and girls, who suffer the most. This provides fertile ground for crises and conflict.

We have noted that the refugee problem, which is growing daily, has two essential aspects. On the one hand is the protection of refugees and providing assistance to them — medical and emergency services and foodstuffs. On the other hand there is the need for respect for the national sovereignty of the States that are providing them with asylum until they can exercise their right to return. These are integral parts of the international community's responsibilities. We must decide how this problem can be dealt with, taking into account the sovereignty of States and fundamental human rights.

Tunisia considers that this means that there must be a debate in the proper bodies — within the General Assembly, in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), or in the context of an international conference especially convened for that purpose. We note that a study is under way in the Secretariat to that end. We hope that it will be concluded soon. The conclusions of the study would, of course, be submitted to all parties concerned for their approval.

It goes without saying that the subject of refugees has taken on great importance within the Organization of African Unity (OAU). As you know, the OAU Council of Ministers set up a special committee to deal with refugees that in 1999 travelled to the field in quite a few African countries with a view to getting first-hand information about the situation in the countries most affected. Those visits are taking place under the OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa that was ratified by 44 States, including Tunisia, in 1969. The first international conference on refugees and displaced persons in Africa was held in Khartoum in December 1998. That Conference had as its priority subjects enhancing the capacity of African States to deal with the refugee problem, mobilizing resources, raising the international community's awareness, and a way of attenuating the burdens on States. At its most recent meeting in Algiers, the OAU Council of Ministers made a similar appeal.

Today, in this supreme forum, the Security Council, we again urge the international community to help African States to deal with the refugee problem and address the essential problems evoked by Mrs. Ogata, and to address the establishment of machinery to put an end to the various conflicts and crises that exist in the African continent and impede our achievement of international peace and development.

This involves political, economic, social and human aspects, all of which must be addressed when dealing with this problem. My country supports all of Mrs. Ogata's proposals and I thank her once again.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): First of all, I would like to commend your initiative, Sir, of inviting the United Nations High Commissioner to brief the Security Council on the refugee situation in Africa. I wish to thank High Commissioner Ogata for her thoughtful intervention and interesting suggestions. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the dedicated international and local staff of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), who help many people in need, often serving under extremely difficult and dangerous conditions and running great personal risks.

The rise of inter-State and inter-ethnic conflicts in Africa in the past decade uprooted a huge number of persons from their places of origin and caused them to flee their countries of residence in search of personal security and safety. This especially complex situation, which has exacerbated the old refugee problems and created new crises of immense proportions, represents a tremendous challenge to the international community. The analysis that we have just heard from Mrs. Ogata goes to the very core of the problem and gives us quite a disturbing picture.

We have no doubt that the UNHCR and other relevant agencies working in the field have sufficient experience and knowledge to deal with all types of situations. This discussion, however, should focus rather on what we in the Security Council and the international community as a whole can do to facilitate their work and contribute to the solution of the problems of refugees and internally displaced persons.

In this connection, I would like to mention two new factors which make the solution of refugee issues more difficult. They are the gradual loss of the host countries' tolerance, caused by the massive refugee populations' staying on for prolonged periods of time, and the ever-growing reluctance of the donor countries to provide necessary assistance — so-called "donor fatigue". While the former should, in our opinion, be addressed, including by the Security Council, on a case-by-case basis, the latter is of a more general nature and requires a coordinated approach and a commitment of solidarity on the part of the donor community.

It has become increasingly evident that humanitarian assistance alone cannot solve the political problems that cause internal displacement and outflows of refugees and internally displaced persons. Only the political solution of conflicts can ensure durable solutions of refugee problems and sustainable peace. This is precisely the area where the Security Council can and must make its meaningful contribution.

In this connection, I would like to draw members' attention to one of the aspects of the refugee problem in Africa that, we believe, deserves the special attention of the Council and has clear relevance to the ability of the Security Council to contribute effectively to building a culture of conflict prevention. In particular, I wish to refer to the cases where refugees and internally displaced persons themselves become a source of instability and renewed strife, thus spreading the virus of conflict to new territories. Large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in camps and settlements, even if they are taken care of by the UNHCR or other appropriate agencies on the ground, often contribute to the depletion of local resources and the destabilization of labour markets, thus creating likely sources of tension with the local population or becoming the easy targets of various opposition and rebel groups that recruit new members into their forces. On previous occasions, the Security Council has addressed the problem of refugee camp and settlement security, the curtailment of arms flows to such camps and settlements, and the disarmament and demobilization of former combatants. Nevertheless, we believe that more should be done in this context.

In particular, the Security Council, while discussing specific conflict situations in Africa or peace-building measures following such conflict situations, may consider sending, at regular intervals, special missions to major refugee camps and areas in order to assess the situation on the ground, as well as to assess the possible impact of the refugee crisis both on the host country and on the security situation in the region. The Security Council may also consider the establishment, with the consent of the host country, of preventive deployment missions, if circumstances so require. Taking into account general understanding among the members of the Security Council on the need to strengthen the preventive dimension in its activities, we consider that such missions could become an effective instrument in the context of today's issue. These ideas are not new; they are in principle reflected in the previous presidential statement on the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflict. What is needed is their proper application in this particular context.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work being done by the existing United Nations inter-agency arrangements and by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the provision of humanitarian assistance and protection to internally displaced persons and other persons in areas of conflict.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock (United Kingdom): I think Mrs. Ogata has thrown us a bit of a challenge this morning. I have been going quite carefully through her speech since she made it.

The challenge is to get beyond analysis, which we are quite rich on this morning, into some suggestions for practical action. Of course, she and we need to say that we must stop conflict and we must help internally displaced persons and refugees. We can put that in various detailed ways, but actually we are not necessarily going to do very much by saying that and we are not going to do very much by issuing a worthy but unoperational presidential statement later this morning.

There are two areas which I would like to touch on very briefly, since I think we are going to need another session on this if there is to be a proper follow-up. One is Mrs. Ogata's suggestions in parts of her speech on what we should be focusing on. I think it may help if she says a little bit more about a couple of them: access to internally displaced persons and refugees and the responsibility of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for that; as well as her difficulties to get through Governments. We need only think of the situations in Angola and, of course, Burundi, as well as other places where humanitarian workers have been deliberately attacked and prevented from getting to the people we are trying to help. There is the question of access and special protection and I am

glad we are talking as much this morning about internally displaced persons as about refugees.

There were two particular areas Mrs. Ogata fastened on: the strengthening of law enforcement capacity and support for regional peacekeeping. In those two areas, she is bridging the debate through to the responsibility of Governments on the ground. The United Kingdom, for one, is trying to do a lot in Africa to increase capacity by one means or another. I will not spend time in going over what we are doing.

This takes us through to the duty of Governments on the ground. I entirely accept that it is the particular duty of richer countries outside Africa to put resources into this problem. I hope we are doing that, but, as African representatives in particular have said, we are not doing it enough. The problem we always find with Africa in particular — and this is why we are having a "month of Africa" — is that what we are doing is mopping up the misery, but we do not seem to have a handle on the tap out of which misery is flowing. Unless you have a sense of turning off the tap that is producing misery, there is a disincentive to go on pouring money into a bottomless box.

There are two things that I noted Mrs. Ogata as saying. The difficulty of having access to large numbers of people in insecure and isolated areas is compounded by the complexity of assisting civilians in their own country, where their own state authorities or rebel forces in control are frequently the very cause of their predicament.

There are no effective conflict-resolution mechanisms in Africa; on the contrary, armed groups waging war against Governments are often openly supported by other Governments. I am not seeking to transfer blame for failure to support a huge programme for internally displaced persons and refugees in Africa. But the responsibility for internally displaced persons and refugees has to be shared by mechanisms like UNHCR, Governments outside Africa and Governments on the ground. Where is the accountability for this? I believe that one of the good things about this debate, like the AIDS debate on Monday, is that we are raising the profile of problems that do not often get debated properly.

Just as there should be a stigma for Governments that will not recognize that there is an AIDS problem, there should be a stigma for Governments that allow national policies to override ordinary people's lives, at the cost of ruining them. Of course, there is sensitivity in the Security Council about getting into that sort of business, but, as a result, we do not address the problem. I believe that we are going to need to discuss quite a bold new step at some point if we are to have any effect on the misery of conflict in Africa.

Ambassador Dejammet pointed to a very important area in comparing what happens in Europe with what does not happen in Africa. In Europe we have the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which has had a huge effect on producing freedom and better standards in Europe. We now have a stability pact for parts of Europe that are still a long way behind the times in dealing with proper standards and human misery. Why do we not have that for Africa? Why do not Africans have that for Africa? Unless we have a structure which has the strength in its framework to bear the burden of what UNHCR and other organizations are trying to do in Africa, everything collapses.

So we must talk about the responsibility of leaderships in Africa and about accountability for ruining people's lives, as well as about the insufficiency of resources that are being put into the work of UNHCR and other organizations. Unless we follow up this debate with some discussion of what Ambassador Dejammet and others, and I, have said this morning, we are not going to achieve anything by way of results.

Finally, I believe that in paying tribute to what UNHCR is doing, which we all do — and to you, Mr. President, for holding this debate — we should express an interest in Mrs. Ogata's suggestion of a refugee education trust, which I think my Government would like to look at in terms of wishing to support it. There is an idea there which can be expanded, and I would like to thank Mrs. Ogata for making that proposal. But in following up, we must go back to the area that she called middle-level security measures, which, I believe, will be the area, in practice, where the Security Council should be following up, as long as there can be a proper framework in Africa for a partnership between African leaderships and other continents in dealing with the problem we are talking about today.

Mr. Listre (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for having convened this meeting to enable us to listen to the valuable information that Mrs. Ogata has provided, not only to the members of the Security Council but to all the States Members of the United Nations. We believe that this practice contributes greatly to enhancing transparency in the work of the Council.

We should like to thank Mrs. Ogata for her work at the head of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and to thank all of the staff of that agency, which this year is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary. Her statement, which was as pertinent and enlightening as always, reaffirms our conviction that the refugee problem is complex and urgent from a humanitarian standpoint and from the perspective of providing protection.

While the urgency of the situation is not restricted to Africa — last year we witnessed dramatic refugee flows in Kosovo and East Timor — the persistence of the problem on the African continent requires particular attention. The statistics on Africa speak for themselves. The conflicts in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sierra Leone, Burundi and other countries of the region have resulted in millions of refugees and internally displaced persons, most of whom are living in great insecurity under horribly unsanitary conditions, as Mrs. Ogata has explained. Many of them are women and children, which makes the problem even more tragic.

We must ask ourselves what we can do in the Council to deal with these recurrent crises. In our view, there is a direct correlation between conflict and the forced displacement of people. The Council should therefore find a speedy and lasting solution to the first problem, with a view to eliminating the causes of the second. I should like to endorse the graphic words of the representative of the United Kingdom, who described the very tragic and difficult situation of not dealing with the causes of conflict and the discouragement on the part of the international community with regard to continuing to help in a situation which cannot be resolved if such causes are not dealt with.

With regard to the Democratic Republic of the Congo, we hope the debates scheduled to take place during this month will give an impetus to the Lusaka peace process. In Sierra Leone, we hope that an enhanced United Nations presence will help to stabilize the peace that was obtained with such difficulty through the Lomé Agreement. In Burundi, the designation as facilitator of the Arusha process of former President Mandela, to whom we will have the opportunity of listening later this month, must also be supported by this Council. We believe that it is very important for Africans to see that there are no double standards in the way those problems are dealt with. That is why the message sent by this Council must be clear; the Council must respond effectively.

I should like to refer briefly to the issue of security and the well-being of refugees and internally displaced persons. In addition to the instruments at our disposal, the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, issued last September, contains various recommendations on protecting refugees and internally displaced persons, which we believe should guide the Council. Many of those recommendations can and should be implemented as quickly as possible, particularly those relating to humanitarian access and the security of people in the camps. In this context, we should like to thank Canada for its initiative to follow up the implementation of those recommendations, which are currently being analysed by the Security Council working group chaired by that country.

In our opinion, the protection of refugees will also involve guaranteeing access and security for the humanitarian workers who help them. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of incidents in which the staff of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies have lost their lives. That is a worrying problem; we believe that it should concern the entire international community and that requires urgent resolution. In this context, we would like Mrs. Ogata to tell us, perhaps during this meeting, what measures she believes are possible or in her judgement should be adopted to enhance the security of humanitarian workers in such operations.

But above and beyond any concrete measures that the Council might adopt, it is clear that any action that is undertaken will require considerable resources. Such resources were obtained for Kosovo and for East Timor, a response on the part of the international community that left no doubt about the commitment of the donors to those peoples. But as the Ambassador of the United Kingdom so wisely said, similar resources are not found with the same ease for some African conflicts, because the causes of those conflicts are not addressed, and so it often seems that the funds are going into, as he said, a bottomless box.

I believe, Mr. President, that your decision to make January the "month of Africa" is wise and commendable. We hope that Africa continues to receive the same response from the international community that others have received with respect to these issues.

Mr. Keita (Mali) (*spoke in French*): I should like to welcome Mrs. Ogata, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, among us. I should like to

thank her for the very useful and frequently moving information that she has given us. We would also like to thank her for having devoted her initial thoughts to the millions of African refugees who have greeted the new millennium in the most difficult circumstances. Her presence here gives this meeting all its significance. Mali is pleased to see included on the Security Council's agenda the item "Promoting peace and security: humanitarian assistance to refugees in Africa".

The first week of the Security Council's work in the third millennium has been marked by the consideration of two closely related subjects of great concern and great importance: the impact of AIDS on security and stability in Africa and the promotion of peace and security. Our attention is demanded when solemn declarations and recognized principles relating to respect for humanitarian law do not lead to action at a time when action is necessary. The credibility of our commitment is at stake.

The various issues raised by the High Commissioner for Refugees require our attention. The Council must reaffirm its commitment to Africa in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and in reaffirmation of the principles of the political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all Member States.

African States have made considerable progress in democratization, economic reform and respect for the protection of human rights with a view to achieving political stability, peace and lasting economic and social development. Despite these positive developments, Mali remains deeply concerned by both the number and the intensity of armed conflicts on our continent, particularly in Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Burundi and Angola and the fratricidal dispute between Eritrea and Ethiopia. These conflicts, as is well known, are the source of the flows of displaced populations. This is why we agree with Mrs. Ogata when she says that it is high time the Council became involved by taking concrete action.

My delegation appreciates the work being done by the United Nations, the specialized agencies and the many other agencies that are working to alleviate the suffering of African refugee populations, but we would be even more appreciative if the international community and the media showed the same concern towards Africa as they have towards other areas of the world, which would constitute a basis of equal treatment in the protection of refugees and displaced persons.

The exodus of civilian populations affected by a conflict can seriously compromise international peace and security. In this connection, I should like to emphasize that in order to provide protection to humanitarian workers, to refugees and to other people affected by a conflict, coordinated steps must be taken, in accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter. We must also ensure the protection of refugee camps and aid to host countries. My delegation condemns the increased number of attacks and the more frequent use of force against refugees and other civilian populations in conflict situations, as well as any attack or use of force against United Nations and associated personnel or the personnel of humanitarian organizations, in violation of applicable international law, including international humanitarian law.

The foundation of a peaceful society is respect for basic human rights, for human dignity and for the value of the human being. The search for peace in Africa requires a global, concerted and resolute approach, based on the elimination of poverty, the promotion of democracy and sustainable development and respect for human rights, as well as the prevention and settlement of conflicts, the maintenance of peace and humanitarian assistance. A real show of political will is necessary in Africa in order to obtain lasting results in this area. To this end, support is required for the various mechanisms created in the continent to contain its many conflicts, as well as the maintenance and augmentation of the resources made available by donor countries.

We also support the establishment of a special trust fund that would enable young refugees to pursue their studies, and we endorse all of the proposals that Mrs. Ogata has made, for which I thank her. In conclusion, my country hopes that the appeals made today will be followed by concrete action.

The President: Thank you Mr. Ambassador for your statement that now is the time to take action.

Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh): My delegation thanks High Commissioner Sadako Ogata for her brilliant and comprehensive briefing on refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. We recognize the importance of the issues she has raised and the usefulness of the recommendations she has made. We commend the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and its dedicated staff for their remarkable work.

As we take up the issue of the refugee situation in Africa today, linked with Monday's discussion on HIV/AIDS in Africa, the focus is on the protection and security of every individual. Mrs. Ogata said, "Africa ... will not be secure unless its people feel secure." (*supra.*) We fully agree with that statement.

During armed conflicts, it is often the innocent, the weak and the vulnerable who are affected the most. We believe that it is timely and significant that the Council is registering strong concern about the difficult situation of refugees and displaced persons and considering what we can do to redress that situation.

We believe that the Council could address the following matters:

First, internal displacement and the outflow of refugees very often occur as a result of armed conflicts. The root causes of conflict must be addressed in order to prevent these. Obviously, the Council has an important role to play. Mrs. Ogata's focus on a comprehensive mechanism to protect people fleeing their homes and on comprehensive regionally based solutions should get particular attention from the Council. The Council should also address two security priorities identified by her: both law enforcement capacity and systematic support for regional peacekeeping should be focused upon in our deliberations.

Secondly, there must be adequate protection and assistance for both refugees and displaced persons. The particular difficulties in the provision of humanitarian assistance to displaced persons in situations of armed conflicts need to be addressed.

Thirdly, the special protection needs of women and children will have to be met, considering that they are the majority among refugees and displaced persons and are particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and disease. Here, we welcome the UNHCR plan to launch a special refugee education trust for the pursuit of post-primary education, with particular attention to the needs of girls.

Fourthly, while it must be recognized that the protection of displaced persons and the provision of humanitarian assistance are the primary responsibility of the States concerned, there have been attempts by the United Nations to formulate guidelines to assist these people. Further focused work needs to be done in this regard.

Fifthly, all parties in armed conflict should comply fully with their obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee laws. There should be better implementation of relevant norms with regard to internally displaced persons.

Sixthly, humanitarian assistance must be allowed to reach the people who are in need of it. Refugees and displaced persons often face situations in which such assistance does not reach them. This needs to be looked at urgently.

Finally, the international community should do more to ensure that necessary financial assistance is provided to refugee and displaced persons programmes, particularly in Africa, in order to make them effective. Like Mrs. Ogata, we find it totally unacceptable that what is provided to refugees in Africa is far less than what is provided in other parts of the world.

The President: I hope that we will all study your specific proposals. Perhaps you could distribute those so that we could look at them as soon as possible.

I now welcome back from his protracted holidays the Ambassador of the Russian Federation. We look forward to your statement, Ambassador Lavrov.

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Unfortunately, It was not just a matter of holidays; there was also a lot of hard work. But I will tell you afterwards what I was dealing with.

The President: Did it have to do with the change in the leadership of your Government?

Mr. Lavrov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Not that serious.

Like other colleagues who have spoken before me, I welcome Mrs. Ogata. I would like to thank her very much for her briefing, which was a very comprehensive confirmation of the existence of serious problems on the matter of Africa's refugees and internally displaced persons. We have heard yet another analysis of those problems, as well as her appeal to the Security Council to make its contribution to resolving those problems. I fully agree with her appeal. I also agree with what has been said by many of my colleagues, namely, that the time has now come to move on to real action. We believe that, within its competence, the Security Council can and must make its contribution to resolving those problems.

I would very briefly like to say that we do agree with the need for comprehensive support for the African initiative being taken by the Organization of African Unity and at the level of subregional organizations not only to deal with the specific problems of refugees and internally displaced persons, but also with efforts to resolve conflicts. As many colleagues have said, that is the underlying cause of the existence of refugees and internally displaced persons.

The Security Council, of course, has a special responsibility in the settlement of conflicts, and we will be ready to do our utmost to support the efforts of the African countries themselves through concrete action. In this regard, we will be guided by this willingness during consideration in the Council of specific conflict situations in Africa.

The President: I hope everyone in the audience knows that the comments I made to an important and esteemed colleague, with whom we work closely and collaboratively on a wide range of issues, were only in jest.

Mr. Qin Huasun (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank Mrs. Ogata for her briefing to the Security Council on the question of refugees in Africa.

We would also like to thank the President of the Council and the American delegation for organizing this open briefing. We appreciate the efforts they have made.

We hope that Mrs. Ogata's presence in the Council and her briefing on the question of refugees in Africa can help raise the awareness of the international community on the question of refugees in Africa and prompt it to make greater efforts in this regard.

The Chinese delegation would like to express its deep sympathy for the tragic plight faced by the large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa. We would also like to express our appreciation for the efforts made by the relevant international organizations and the agencies and bodies of the United Nations to protect and assist refugees and internally displaced persons. In particular, we would like to thank the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mrs. Ogata and her colleagues for the great amount of useful work they have long been doing to solve the problem of refugees.

We would also like to call upon all sides concerned to follow international humanitarian, human rights and refugee laws and to actively cooperate with the international community in its efforts to protect refugees and internally displaced persons.

The Chinese delegation has on many occasions emphasized that the key to the settlement of the question of refugees lies in eliminating the root causes. We believe that political instability, economic underdevelopment, poverty and backwardness are the major reasons for the existence of refugees in Africa. Those problems have gone on for a long time with no solution and have become further exacerbated.

At present, the international community understands this point clearly. In the various open debates held by the Council on the question of Africa, representatives of many countries, including African countries, have emphasized the need for the international community to take effective measures to help African countries eliminate poverty and develop their economies. We support those ideas.

In this light, we call upon the international community — on the basis of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs — to increase its support and assistance to African countries and to help them maintain peace and promote development in order finally to solve the question of refugees. In the meantime, we hope that in providing assistance the international community will follow the principle of fairness and avoid imbalances in the provision of assistance throughout the world.

As a developing country China has, within its capabilities, been providing various types of assistance to African countries through multilateral and bilateral channels. China has established a good cooperative relationship with UNHCR, and we wish to continue and to enhance that cooperation in order to make our own contribution to the settlement of the refugee question in Africa.

The President: We all know that Ambassador Qin Huasun's time in New York in his current job is drawing to a close, and we thank him for his participation today in the midst of his busy round of farewell calls.

Mr. van Walsum (Netherlands): We too would like to thank Mrs. Ogata for her briefing, which was true to her style in its directness and precision. My delegation

greatly appreciates Mrs. Ogata's virtual inability to express herself in the vague terms we so often hear in this Chamber and her unwillingness to cover unacceptable situations with the cloak of charity.

We also endorse Mrs. Ogata's right to speak about purely political issues such as the need to revitalize and strengthen the Arusha peace process in Burundi, the frightful repercussions she foresees for the Democratic Republic of the Congo if the Lusaka Agreement should not be implemented and the need for the Security Council to strengthen its support for the Organization of African Unity (OAU) initiative towards the solution of the Ethiopian-Eritrean conflict. All this corresponds with my delegation's view on the desirability of an integrated approach.

As a result of this direct style, Mrs. Ogata's statements never fail to contain elements that may be less than pleasant for certain delegations to hear, but the redeeming factor here is that the spread of her critical comments is always so global that every delegation gets its turn when Mrs. Ogata takes the floor. We can only commend her for this. This is the way it should be, and I believe, Mr. President, that it corresponds with the format you have in mind for the open meetings during the American presidency.

We have listened with great attention to Mrs. Ogata's comments on the absence of an established mechanism for the assistance and particularly the protection of the internally displaced. We are aware of the shift that is taking place in the ratio of refugees in the classical sense to internally displaced persons. We are also aware of the complexity, which was already referred to by Ambassador Greenstock, of assisting civilians in their own countries where their own Government may well be the cause of their predicament. It is clear that this category is bound to grow in a world where the majority of armed conflicts are of an internal nature.

Several aspects, such as humanitarian access, which has been mentioned by several speakers, for which practical arrangements exist in classical refugee situations, often require entirely new solutions in a situation involving internally displaced persons. Another instance of this phenomenon may be the question of voluntary repatriation. If I am not mistaken, this is an issue that has also become more complex due to the shift to which I have just referred.

In the classical refugee situation, the problem was relatively simple. Voluntary repatriation was always the best solution, but if there was the slightest flaw in the voluntary nature of the return, it became the worst solution and was then called *refoulement*. We would like to hear from Mrs. Ogata if we are right in assuming that this issue has become less straightforward in a situation involving internally displaced persons.

It is probably not a field where the Security Council can be of help, apart from calling attention to the problem, but my question to Mrs. Ogata is whether she feels the Security Council can contribute to the search for comprehensive solutions for assisting and protecting all people who leave their homes fleeing war and persecution.

The natural and obvious focus of the Security Council will, of course, continue to be on preventing, containing and resolving conflicts. Mrs. Ogata correctly observed that human action cannot substitute for Governments and the Security Council, which have a clear responsibility in these fields. In that respect, we have taken due note of what Mrs. Ogata said about the need for us to move from issuing statements to taking action.

The President: Thank you, Ambassador, for your important statement, which I think went precisely to the goals of this meeting.

I will now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of the United States and then ask Mrs. Ogata to respond, if there is time — a quick colloquy — and then I have a presidential statement that we have all agreed to.

First let me say that the 14 previous speakers have so adequately covered the terrain that I would like simply to abandon my prepared text, which has been distributed. I would like to speak from the heart, to be quite frank, because I have working on this problem since 1978. In fact, the year I started working on it was the year I first met Mrs. Ogata. We are all refugees in another sense of the word, from the Cambodian-Thai border, where we began our deep personal involvement and, I might add with great pleasure, our deep personal collaboration in the field of refugees.

I commend you, Mrs. Ogata. I commend you, my dear friend, for the precision and brilliance of your statement, and I echo what Ambassador van Walsum said about your fearlessness in addressing the fact that there are political causes for refugees, and they must be

addressed. You have helped us for next week by pointing out that what we discuss on Burundi will affect your work. Too often here we deal only with the consequences and not sufficiently with the causes, and you have done us a great service in laying the framework for next week's discussions.

I also want to echo what the representative of Mali said, that it is time to take more concrete actions. I also echo what Ambassador Qin Huasun of China said, that we are here to correct imbalances in the world, and I will specifically address the imbalance I wish to focus on at the moment.

I failed to acknowledge at the outset that we are also joined today by Francis Deng, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons. He and Roberta Cohen have written a very important book on the subject, and I would commend it to all members.

Since everything that needs to be said about refugees in Africa has already been said, and Sir Jeremy Greenstock has also alluded correctly to the fact that refugees in other parts of the world are in dire straits, I would make only one specific regional comment and then move on to the question of internally displaced persons, and that relates to West Timor.

I must say frankly that I remain dissatisfied with the rate of return from West Timor since the trip I made in November. It fluctuates. I recognize that some 20 per cent or more of those refugees will not ever wish to go back to East Timor. Fine. The Indonesian Government should resettle those people immediately, because some of them are terrorizing the camps and others are just sitting there in lieu of getting out into society. That puts a burden on the international community which in this case is no longer necessary. Finally, some elements within the Indonesian military are still supporting the militia.

I mention this point today because next month, the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) will be replaced by the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). There are still 1,000 militia in the area. They tested the Australian-led INTERFET and found that that was a dangerous and sometimes fatal action. I would not be surprised if they try to test the United Nations when the command changes, and this could create additional problems in the camps, as well as a problem for us that we do not need when we want to focus on Africa. In this room, we have many of the distinguished people who, led by Ambassador Andjaba, went to East Timor. I hope we will all keep a careful brief on that, Mr. Ambassador, and I hope you and your colleagues who were there will keep us informed.

Allow me to turn to the subject under discussion today. This is obviously a huge problem. I wish to focus on the fact that two thirds of the world's refugees do not fall under the official purview of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). We call them "IDPs". In our Mission across the street, we have tried to figure out ways of abolishing this odious term. The very use of initials to refer to people is in itself not healthy. When I was a young child growing up in New York, we talked about DPs, so it is not new to have such phrases. But these are people, and to a person who has been driven from his or her home by conflict, there is no difference between being a refugee or an internally displaced person. In terms of what has happened to them, they are equal victims, but they are treated differently.

I recognize that this distinction raises complex legal issues of international sovereignty. It raises enormous questions of resource allocation, and it has far-ranging bureaucratic implications as well. I also recognize that the Governments represented in this room and elsewhere have various reactions to the issue. But let us remember that individual lives are at stake.

What is an internally displaced person? What is a refugee? They do not care; they are all homeless. We must address this problem. We need to acknowledge frankly that there is no real difference to the victims involved. Then we need to call upon the world body and all its specialized agencies, and through its Member States, to figure out what to do with the problem that was not fully foreseen when the United Nations Charter was shaped and when the UNHCR drew its mandate. For example, Francis Deng is responsible to the Commission on Human Rights in Geneva. That is fine; I applaud the Commission on Human Rights. But in my view, he should be working directly with and for the UNHCR, with the Security Council and with the Economic and Social Council across the board, in order to stimulate all of us to deal with this problem. His book — Roberta Cohen's book — contains many practical suggestions and a lot of analysis.

I would go further. Speaking from my own perspective, having worked on this issue for a quarter of a century, I think that responsibility for internally displaced persons should be fixed in a single bureaucratic

entity. When my colleagues and I were in Angola last month, we saw that 90 per cent of the refugees were classified as internally displaced persons and that, for the most part, they were out of reach of the international community's assistance. But to the extent they had support from the international community, it tended to be from the World Food Programme (WFP). The WFP is a fine organization, but the best organization operating in the world — the best one, with the longest track record and the best infrastructure — is the UNHCR. Some of the non-governmental organizations in the room have told me how sometimes the UNHCR does not support efforts, even when it has surplus capacity of motor vehicles or personnel, because of bureaucratic restrictions, restrictions of the host Government or, I regret to say, occasionally inadequate relationships between the agencies involved.

The reason we all turn to UNHCR, and then often criticize it, is precisely because it is our last best hope for dealing with these problems. Therefore, the pressure should not be viewed as criticism, and the criticism itself should be viewed within the context of the organization that we look to most of all for leadership.

Without putting a formal and specific proposal on behalf of my Government before you today, I would hope that all of us would recognize that what we must do is expand the definition of what is a refugee, erode — if not erase — the distinction between a refugee and a person who is internally displaced, deal with these problems, fix the responsibility more clearly in a single agency and not fall back on one of the worst of all euphemisms, "coordinate closely". In Angola's case, this is a physical impossibility, since the United Nations agencies are scattered in 10 different buildings in a city without good working telephones or good infrastructure. And let us get on with trying to address the problem.

Speaking in my national capacity, I hope that this conversation we are having today — to continue with Mrs. Ogata's response in a moment — will stimulate all of us, with her leadership and, I hope, that of the Secretary-General, to re-examine the definitions and to treat internally displaced persons, who are 90 per cent of the problem in Angola and 70 per cent of the problem world-wide, in such a way that they do not fall between the bureaucratic cracks.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I would like to ask the High Commissioner to comment or respond to anything she heard. From this point forward until I read the Presidential Statement, I would like to consider this a conversation, not a series of set-piece speeches. We welcome your comments, Mrs. Ogata.

Mrs. Ogata: Really, what I would like to say is to express my appreciation. If I was too direct and precise, I would like you to understand that it came from a sense of desperation. We cannot solve the refugee problems without the Council's input, and it is in this sense that I was enormously encouraged by several delegations who said that the time for concrete action is here — that the time is now. We do want action, because we are an agency working in the field. Eighty per cent of our colleagues are on the front lines, and this is why it is a privilege for me to be able to present my appeal to the Security Council. We do have enormous expectations that the Security Council will come up with better conflict resolution proposals. It is a very complex issue.

I would just like to say that, on the question of internally displaced persons and refugees, I fully agree that solutions to their problems are the same. The refugees are given a certain international status to be able to get asylum and protection in the countries where they seek asylum. I do not think this should be dismantled. It is very, very important. However, when it comes to the question of how we can do more for the internally displaced, I am certainly prepared to examine what more we can do or what are some of the expected actions that the Security Council would like the UNHCR to examine.

On the question that the Ambassador of the Netherlands has asked about voluntary repatriation, the answer is "yes". We have always thought that people who were forced to leave should not be forced to return. I think the two important factors for returnees are that they have a sense of security when they go back to their countries of origin, and — there is more to it than that — maybe a sense of expecting a better world to come. I think this is why we have always held their willingness to return as the most important factor, and I think this is recognized.

On the subject of voluntary repatriation, however, very often, and especially these days, we cannot provide full voluntariness. There is a range of choices that we can usually provide, and the greater the range, the better. I still remember how during the war in Zaire we had really no choice but to say "If you stay on, you will die".

People were very uncertain about going back to Rwanda, which was undergoing enormous conflict and instability; they were very hesitant, but it was a choice between life or death. I hope I do not have to come up with these stark choices as we move on in the next few years.

As far as return is concerned, however, I find that the internally displaced persons have a much easier time going back. This was true in Mozambique, where there was an enormous population of internally displaced persons. We brought back 1.7 million refugees from the neighbouring countries. Internally displaced persons returned sort of naturally, from one village to another. This also shows that the closer you are to home, the easier it is to return. I think, in this sense, today, with an enormous number of internally displaced persons, we must deal with the problem. The solutions — human solutions — are the same, but the means to get there may not be the same.

I would just like to say how happy my colleagues in the field will be to hear that the Security Council has taken enormous interest in solving the refugee problems. They will be very much encouraged.

The President: I think this will have been a very productive session, but only if there is follow-up. I invite the non-governmental organizations to be as active as possible in keeping the pressure on all of us in this Chamber.

Following consultations among members of the Security Council, I have been authorized to make the following statement on behalf of the Council:

"The Security Council recalls its previous statements concerning protection for humanitarian assistance to refugees and others in conflict situation, the situation in Africa, the protection of civilians in armed conflict, and the role of the Security Council in the prevention of armed conflicts. The Council further recalls its previous relevant resolutions, as well as relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

"Bearing in mind its primary responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, the Security Council underlines the importance of taking measures aimed at conflict prevention and resolution in Africa. The Council stresses the need to address the root causes of armed conflict in a comprehensive manner in order to prevent those circumstances which lead to internal displacement and the outflow of refugees. The Council notes with concern that the majority of refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons and others affected by conflict are women and children and stresses the need to intensify efforts to meet their special protection needs, including their vulnerability to violence, exploitation and disease, including HIV/AIDS. The Council underlines the obligation of all Member States to seek to settle their international disputes by peaceful means. The Council condemns the deliberate targeting of civilians and practices of forced displacement. The Council reaffirms its commitment to the principles of political independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States. The Council emphasizes that national authorities have the primary duty and responsibility to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction. The Council reaffirms the obligation of States to prevent arbitrary displacement in situations of armed conflict, and reaffirms as well their responsibility to meet the protection and assistance needs of internally displaced persons within their jurisdiction.

"The Security Council expresses its grave concern that alarmingly high numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa do not receive sufficient protection and assistance. In this context, the Council notes that refugees are protected under the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, and other relevant initiatives in the region. The Council also notes that there is no comprehensive protection regime for IDPs and that existing norms are not being fully implemented. The Council recognizes that large-scale human suffering as well as violations of human rights and humanitarian law are consequences and contributing factors to instability and further conflict. In this regard, the Council affirms the need to ensure adequate protection and assistance for both refugees and internally displaced persons, taking into account the special difficulties in the provision of humanitarian assistance to IDPs in Africa.

"The Security Council urges all parties concerned to comply strictly with their obligations under international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law, and emphasizes the need for better implementation of relevant norms with regard to

internally displaced persons. The Council invites States which have not already done so to consider ratifying the relevant instruments of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. The Council takes note of the efforts made within the United Nations system aimed at promoting an effective collective response of the international community to situations of internal displacement. The Council calls upon States, in particular States with situations of internal displacement in Africa, to cooperate fully with such efforts. The Council further notes that the United Nations agencies, regional and non-governmental organizations, in cooperation with host Governments, are making use of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, *inter alia*, in Africa.

"The Security Council reaffirms the responsibility of States hosting refugees to ensure the security and civilian and humanitarian character of refugee camps and settlements in accordance with existing international standards and international refugee, human rights and humanitarian law. In this regard, the Council underlines the unacceptability of using refugees and other persons in refugee camps and settlements to achieve military purposes in the country of asylum or in the country of origin.

"The Security Council underlines the importance of safe and unhindered access, in accordance with international law, of humanitarian personnel to civilians in armed conflict, including refugees and internally displaced persons, and the protection of humanitarian assistance to them, and recalls the responsibility of all parties to conflict to ensure the safety and security of such personnel. The Council condemns recent acts of deliberate violence in Africa against humanitarian personnel.

"The Security Council recognizes the extensive experience and burden of African States in hosting refugees and in dealing with the effects of refugee camps and settlements. The Council welcomes the efforts made to support the needs of refugees in Africa, in particular those of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and host countries. Noting with concern the shortfall in funding for refugee and internally displaced persons programmes in Africa, the Council calls upon the international community to provide such programmes with the necessary financial resources, taking into account the substantial needs in Africa."

This statement will be issued as a document of the Security Council under the symbol S/PRST/2000/1.

There are no further speakers on my list. The Security Council has thus concluded the present stage of its consideration of the item on its agenda.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.